



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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State veterinarian to head new Animal Services division at WSDA

OLYMPIA – The state veterinarian, Dr. Leonard Eldridge, will head a new division within the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) effective June 1.

Eldridge will be head of the Animal Services division. The programs under Eldridge (Animal Health and Livestock Identification) had previously been part of the Food Safety, Animal Health and Consumer Services division.

In announcing the reorganization to WSDA employees, director Valoria Loveland cited the tremendous increase in the Food Safety, Animal Health and Consumer Services division's workload in the last 18 months. She attributed the increase to a number of factors, including a heightened awareness and concern about animal health issues, such as Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) and Avian Influenza; increased emphasis on homeland security preparedness; federal initiatives, such as the National Animal Identification System; the transfer of the livestock nutrient management program from the state Department of Ecology; and greater consumer interest and expectations regarding food safety and inspections.

"We believe," Loveland said, "that this restructuring will enable the agency to better serve the animal industries that are a very important part of our agricultural economy."

Eldridge has been the state veterinarian for eight months. He has almost 40 years experience in the field of large animal veterinary medicine and previously owned and managed a veterinary clinic in Lewiston, Idaho.

Kathy Kravit-Smith, assistant director, will continue to manage the other programs in the division – the food safety program, organic food program, livestock nutrient management program, and the animal health and food diagnostic laboratory.

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